

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A filter insert comprising an annular filter element connected in a fluid-tight manner at one axial end face to a cover and at an opposite axial end face to a base; said filter element having a central channel in which a central tube is situated extending between the cover and the base with said central channel communicating with a central opening in the cover; wherein the central tube has a variable length in the direction of its longitudinal central axis.

2. A filter insert according to claim 1, wherein the central tube comprises at least one length-compensating section with a structure which is resilient in the direction of the longitudinal central axis of the central tube.

3. A filter insert according to claim 1, wherein the central tube is formed by rings arranged perpendicular to the longitudinal central axis of the central tube, said rings being joined together in the axial direction by stays.

4. A filter insert according to claim 3, wherein at least one of said stays has a length-compensating section with a resilient structure.

5. A filter insert according to claim 4, wherein said at least one stay has a V-shape in the length-compensating section.

6. A filter insert according to claim 4, wherein at least one stay runs in a spiral pattern around the longitudinal central axis of the central tube in the length-compensating section.

7. A filter insert according to claim 1, wherein further comprising at least one stop for limiting the minimum length of the central tube.

8. A filter insert according to claim 7, wherein said at least one stop is formed by a stay in the length-compensating section which extends toward and is spaced a distance (a) from an adjacent ring of the central tube.

9. A filter insert according to claim 1, wherein the central tube and the cover together form a receptacle for a gasket.

10. A filter insert according to claim 9, wherein the receptacle is a peripheral groove which is divided at a right angle to the longitudinal central axis of the central tube, a part of the receptacle being integrally molded on the central tube, and part of the receptacle being integrally molded on the cover.

11. A filter insert according to claim 1, wherein the central tube is made of a synthetic resin material.

12. A filter insert according to claim 1, wherein at least one of the base and the cover is made of synthetic resin material.

13. A filter insert according to claim 12, wherein the filter element is welded to the cover and the base.